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# Secret Talks With Iran Described

## 3 Hostages Freed Over 14 Months Of Negotiations

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The release of three American hostages in Lebanon over the last 14 months followed a series of shipments of military cargo to Iran after secret discussions between top White House envoys and representatives of the Tehran regime, informed sources said yesterday.

The freeing last Sunday of David P. Jacobsen—as well as the releases last July of the Rev. Lawrence Jenco and the Rev. Benjamin Weir in September 1985—came about after talks with Iranian representatives were conducted by Robert C. McFarlane, President Reagan's former national security adviser, and others, including Lt. Col. Oliver North, a member of the National Security Council staff.

Details of the talks emerged yesterday in the wake of disclosures by Iranian officials Monday that McFarlane went to Tehran in September as a secret U.S. envoy to discuss the hostages. Other U.S. sources familiar with the mission said McFarlane also had urged Iran to halt its support of terrorism and work toward an end to the Iraq-Iran war.

U.S. intelligence sources said McFarlane, North and others conducted talks with Iranians and their intermediaries for more than a year in European cities and Tehran. The discussions included an Iranian need for "defensive" military equipment, sources said, along with long-term financial stability that would occur with a rise in world oil prices.

On Sept. 14, 1985, according to news service reports, Turkish sources said a DC8 cargo plane flying from Tabriz in Iran to Spain had landed at a Tel Aviv airport after developing communications problems. Yesterday, informed sources said that the plane, which the Turkish sources thought was American-owned, had carried a shipment of military equipment that originated initially in Israel and had been arranged after talks between the American officials and Iranians.

That same day, Weir was quietly released in Lebanon after 16 months in captivity by the pro-Iranian Islamic Jihad group which had been holding him and demanding the release of 17 terrorists in Kuwait prisons. First disclosure that he was free came from President Reagan on Sept. 18, 1985, during a trip to Concord, N.H. Reagan refused to discuss details.

A similar shipment took place last July, another source said, around the time Jenco was released. It is not clear what kind of military cargo has been contained in the shipments, which sources said were purchased on the private arms market and eventually paid for by the Iranian government. The United States, sources said, had agreed not to interfere with such purchases.

When asked yesterday during a Cable News Network interview about reports the administration was seeking an accommodation with Iran, White House chief of staff Donald T. Regan said, "I don't want to talk anything about the Iran situation or go into any details of how we're negotiating in order to get these hostages out."

"There are lives at stake here," he said. "Opportunities can be lost by premature disclosure."

Senior Reagan administration officials, including the president, have frequently said that U.S. policy precludes negotiating with terrorists or nations that support terrorism to obtain the freedom of American hostages. Some State Department officials yesterday expressed anger and resentment at what they claimed could be a reversal of that policy.

The idea of opening a channel for U.S. officials to discuss the hostages with the Iranians came last year from the Israelis, according to a report yesterday over Israeli Radio by its Washington correspondent, Shimon Shiffer.

U.S. officials found out as a result of the June 1985 hijacking of a TWA airliner that the Islamic Jihad faction would not respond to Syrian demands to free the hostages, according to informed U.S. sources. It was

only after a top Iranian official intervened and traveled to Damascus that the final four hostages from the airliner were freed.

Pursuing the Israeli suggestion of a conduit to the Iranians, McFarlane met in London with David Kimche, who then-director general of the Israeli foreign ministry, Shiffer reported.

A secret supplying of military equipment to the Iranians by the Israelis in 1981-1982 has been publicly acknowledged by then-Defense Minister Ariel Sharon. His allegation that U.S. officials had been aware of details of the shipments was denied at the time by State Department spokesmen.

Since the public uproar over Sharon's disclosure, the Reagan administration has publicly declared a policy of barring any shipments of U.S. military equipment to Iran or approving third countries selling U.S. surplus arms to Tehran.

On Tuesday, White House spokesman Larry Speakes reiterated the policy that "as long as Iran advocates the use of terrorism, the U.S. embargo will continue."

Sources said that the McFarlane discussions were conducted without the knowledge of key State Department officials. "It was held very tightly," one official said yesterday, and prompted serious concern among the few who were aware of it.

Yesterday, several Arab diplomats reportedly expressed concern over the disclosures. One diplomatic source familiar with the Iraqi position said that its government was taken totally by surprise and was seeking an explanation from the State Department.

In Tehran yesterday, Iranian officials gave a new version of McFarlane's visit, which had been disclosed originally as part of an internal battle between factions in Iran.

United Press International reported that state-owned Tehran radio, monitored in Athens, yesterday quoted Prime Minister Mir Hossein Musavi as saying the man who introduced himself in Tehran as McFarlane "presented a passport to prove his claim." Iran had copies of the passport but Musavi did not say which country issued it.

IRNA, in two earlier reports, quoted Iran's parliament speaker, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, as saying that McFarlane and the other four men aboard a plane carried spare parts for weapons and held false Irish passports. Iran says the five were detained for five days and then expelled.

Today's IRNA version softened the original version. Rafsanjani was quoted as saying the mission leader "claimed to be McFarlane" but the speaker "was unsure if he was the same person."

Staff writer John M. Goshko contributed to this report.

have also tried to strengthen relations with some Persian Gulf countries, including longstanding rival Saudi Arabia.

Economically, Iran is unable to even meet its oil quota, set by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, of 2.3 million barrels per day, according to the Paris-based Petrostrategies Weekly. Due largely to Iraqi air attacks on its oil installations and on ships in the Gulf, Iran's output is only 1.3 million b.p.d., meaning a loss of at least \$1.5 billion annually.

Indeed, for the first time since 1979, Iran has rationed petroleum at home. Lost foreign revenue has, in turn, deeply affected Tehran's costly war effort.

Militarily, Iran is concerned by Iraq's Western backing and supply lines, notably from France and the US. The US had no relations with either side when the war began in 1980. But in 1984, Washington and Baghdad established links after a 17-year rupture. Whether or not it is true, Iran believes the US provides satellite intelligence to Iraq on Iranian troop and equipment concentrations.

Iran's alleged involvement with terrorism may be the most important obstacle to solving its major problems, as dealing with Tehran is politically anathema to states that suspect they have been its victim. But changing this situation has been made more complex for Iranian moderates by the increasing independence of various extremists cells, especially those outside the country.

Many groups have been trained in Iran and given weapons or funds. But a growing number of their activities suit their own agendas. They apparently still accept Ayatollah Khomeini as their spiri-

tual guide, but not necessarily all the political dictates of Iranian officials.

The emergence of at least one new group in Lebanon, the Revolutionary Justice Organization, may be one example. It has claimed responsibility for kidnapping two Americans in the past two months. Reports in Beirut indicate it is another pro-Iranian Shiite group, a factor that could hinder efforts to free all six remaining Americans, since communication has only been established with Islamic Jihad.

In Tehran, the outcome of the Hashemi-ILM case could have a broad impact at several levels. Most important, it could affect Iran's domestic leadership dispute - specifically whether the moderate block or Ayatollah Montazeri and his supporters will guide Iran's future.

And on the terrorism issue, it could decide the limits on activities by extremist movements based in Tehran as well as on their local sponsors. It could also send a signal to groups outside Iran about the range and targets of their campaign.

So far, Ayatollah Khomeini seems to be siding with the moderates, at least on the Hashemi case. In a letter broadcast on Radio Tehran last week, he said the evidence "produced clear proof that their line has deviated from the revolution and from Islam." And he urged prosecution of "all the accused individuals. . . ."

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